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CHINA-RUSSIA WAR DATA SOUGHT

CIA must suffer critics in silence, Wilson says

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COPLEY NEWS Service

WASHINGTON — When the Central Intelligence Agency makes news, it's almost always bad, or so it seems.

Most recently, it was the agency's involvement in Watergate, before that questions about its activities in the 1970 Chilean elections and before that the criticism of its conduct of a secret war in Laos.

Unfortunately for the agency, the image is one it must bear in silence, says Rep. Bob Wilson, R-San Diego.

"It is physically and psychologically unable to defend itself" because of its need for secrecy, says Wilson, one of a handful of congressmen with intimate knowledge of CIA operations.

Wilson is a member of the House Armed Services subcommittee on intelligence, one of four congressional panels that reviews intelligence agency budgets or operations. The four subcommittees include only 21 representatives and senators.

The intelligence subcommittee, watchdog for CIA operations but not its budget, always meets in closed

session and usually only four or five times a year, Wilson said. It has only two staff aides.

But last year was an unusually busy one for the subcommittee. It was one of the first to investigate the Watergate scandal, although in closed session, when it focused on the CIA role.

But the subcommittee took the unusual step of publishing its findings, concluding that the CIA acted improperly in furnishing false identification papers and disguises to E. Howard Hunt of the White House staff.

The CIA is prohibited from engaging in domestic intelligence gathering. But Hunt used the CIA-provided material in gathering information about the Kennedy family, in the break-in at the office of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist, in an interview with ITT-figure Dita Beard and in the Watergate break-in, the subcommittee said.

The subcommittee, however, placed the blame for the improper activity on White House aides H. R. Haldeman, John Erlichman and John Dean, rather than on the CIA. Wilson agreed with the action in a recent interview.

"They (CIA officials) were conned into giving equipment ostensibly for national security reasons, when in fact that was questionable," he said.

The CIA felt that because the president is the commander-in-chief, the agency had a legal obligation to honor a White House request, he said.

The CIA involvement in Watergate was typical of other Watergate activities, the congressman said. "People were not dealing with the president, but with the White House" and with some aides who "arrogated to themselves powers to which they were not entitled," he said.

The subcommittee investigation produced no evidence, however, that the CIA is involved in any other domestic activities, Wilson added.

At a recent meeting of the subcommittee, Wilson said, CIA director William E. Colby gave members some "valuable insights into what is happening behind the Iron and Bamboo curtains."

As a result, the congressman says, he intends to ask for further information about the possibility of a nuclear conflict between the Soviet Union and China.

Hawaii and the West Coast would quickly be exposed to any nuclear fallout from an explosion in the Far East because the radioactive elements would be carried over by the jet stream, Wilson said.

"I'm not a prophet of doom, but I really think it would be prudent if we did some educating and made some physical improvements in our civil defense facilities," he said.

The San Diego lawmaker says he believes U.S. intelligence gathering is much better now than in the late 1950s when different agencies were coming up with widely varying assessments.

Gathering of such information is now coordinated through the U.S. Intelligence Board, which reports directly to the National Security Council.

The board includes the directors of the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the intelligence branches of the Army, Navy and Air Force and the National Security Agency. Domestic agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Atomic Energy Commission and the intelligence branches of the Treasury and State Departments, also are represented.

The use of surveillance satellites also has improved intelligence gathering in recent years, Wilson said.

Although he's on the intelligence subcommittee, Wilson says he does not know the exact size of the budget for the intelligence community, a figure that is known only to a few members of the House and Senate appropriations committees.

(Sen. William Proxmire, D-Wis., said in a 1973 floor speech that he estimates that the U.S. spends \$6 billion a year on intelligence gathering, with almost 150,000 people involved in such activities, mostly for the military. He estimated the CIA budget at about

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